

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 /075 W
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R 141300Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2453
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 0940

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SY, XF
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH SYRIAN AMBASSADOR

1. SUMMARY: IN A LENGTHY CONVERSATION WHICH LARGELY DEALT WITH THE ME SITUATION, SYRIAN AMBASSADOR ABDUL RAHMAN FARZAT HAD VERY CORDIAL WORDS ABOUT PRESIDENT CARTER AND CONTRIBUTION HE CAN MAKE TO PEACE. HE SAID SYRIA AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAVE NO MAJOR BILATERAL PROBLEMS, BUT EVENTS IN LEBANON HAVE INTRODUCED SOME COOLNESS. END SUMMARY.

2. ME SITUATION: AMBASSADOR FARZAT LAID OUT THE RED CARPET FOR ME AS I PAID A ONCE-POSTPONED COURTESY CALL ON HIM APRIL 13. HE EXPRESSED ENTHUSIASM ABOUT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION AND PRESIDENT CARTER HIMSELF. HE FELT THAT THE PRESIDENT IS NOT ONLY DEFINITELY MOVING IN A
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DIRECTION THAT HOLDS PROMISE FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, BUT OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IS THAT THE PRESIDENT IS GAINING TRUST BECAUSE HE IS A "MAN OF JUSTICE", ONE WHO SPEAKS OUT FOR JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD -- SOUTHERN AFRICA AS WELL AS THE SOVIET UNION -- AND IN THE UN. HE NOTED WITH SPECIAL PLEASURE THAT CARTER IS THE FIRST US

PRESIDENT TO USE THE WORDS "PALESTINIAN HOMELAND".

3. FARZAT SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH SMALL, SYRIA MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN ANY MOVES TOWARD A ME SETTLEMENT. SYRIA HAS A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PALESTINIANS. WHILE ONCE CONSIDERED EXTREMIST, SYRIA IS NOW RANKED AMONG THE MODERATES. HE MADE A POINT OF SAYING THAT PRESIDENT ASAD WILL BE DISCUSSING THE MEANING OF "DEFENSIBLE BORDERS" WITH PRESIDENT CARTER.

4. FARZAT FEELS THAT IF A ME SOLUTION IS NOT REACHED THIS YEAR,; THERE IS A DANGER OF COUPS D'ETAT IN THE REGION, POSSIBLY AT SOVIET INSPIRATION. HE BELIEVES THAT THE CURRENT STATE OF SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS IS NOT A STUMBLING BLOCK FOR PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE, BUT ANY WORSENING IN THOSE RELATIONS COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS. STRESSING THE ANTI-SOVIET THEME, HE STATED THAT THE U.S. SHOULD NOT WORRY ABOUT THE ARABS TURNING COMMUNISTS, EXCEPT FOR A HANDFUL HERE AND THERE, BECAUSE THEY ARE BASICALLY SPIRITUAL PEOPLE, ADDING THAT MOST MAJOR RELIGIONS ORIGINATED IN THE MIDDLE EAST. ONE FAVORABLE FACTOR FOR PEACE, HE THOUGHT, IS THAT ARABS TEND TO KEEP LIKES AND DISLIKES ALIVE FOR A LONG TIME AND THE UNITED STATES IS CURRENTLY VIEWED POSITIVELY BY ARABS.

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5. PLO: ALTHOUGH SYRIA HAS SPECIAL TIES WITH THE PLO, FARZAT HAS NOT YET MET THE PLO REPRESENTATIVE IN PRAGUE, ABDUL ABU BAKR, WHO ASSUMED HIS DUKVS LATE LAST YEAR. BAKR APPEARS TO BE SPENDING MOST OF HIS TIME WITH STUDENTS AND, UNLIKE HIS PREDECESSOR, AVOIDS THE ARAB DIPLOMATIC CORPS. FARZAT THOUGHT BAKR MIGHT HAVE BEEN BEHIND AN ABORTIVE ATTEMPT TO ORGANIZE ARAB STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE SYRIAN, LEBANESE AND U.S. EMBASSIES MARCH 18 FOLLOWING THE ASSASSINATION OF KAMAL JUMBLATT.

6. SYRIAN-CZECHOSLOVAK RELATIONS: FARZAT SAID THERE ARE NOT MAJOR ISSUES ENCUMBERING THESE RELATIONS, ALTHOUGH SYRIAN ACTIONS IN LEBANON HAVE CAUSED SOME COOLNESS. OVER THE YEARS THERE HAVE BEEN MANY PARTY, STATE AND OTHER EXCHANGES; PRESIDENT ASAD WAS HERE IN 1975 AND IT IS PRESIDENT HUSAK'S TURN TO VISIT SYRIA, ALTHOUGH NO DATE HAS

BEEN DISCUSSED. FARZAT PROFESSED NOT TO KNOW WHETHER SYRIA OBTAINS ANY ARMS FROM THIS COUNTRY, ALTHOUGH HE THOUGH IT POSSIBLE SINCE SYRIA IS EQUIPPED PRIMARILY WITH SOVIET TYPES OF ARMS.

7. BIOGRAPHIC: FARZAT, WHO APPEARS TO BE ABOUT 40, HAS VISITED ALL THE WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES EXCEPT POLAND AND SERVED AS A CULTURAL OFFICER IN THE SYRIAN EMBASSY IN SOFIA. HE CONSIDERS HIMSELF SOMWHAT OF AN EXPERT ON THE AREA. HE HAS HEADED BOTH THE SYRIAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION AND THE SYRIAN-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY. HE APPEARS TO UNDERSTAND ENGLISH AND IS ABLE TO SPEAK AT LEAST A FEW WORDS, BUT HE RELIED ON A INTERPRETER DURING OUR TALK. HE PROVED MORE WILLING THAN MANY OF MY AMBASSADORIAL COLLEAGUES TO DISCUSS SUBSTANCE DURING AN INITIAL COURTESY CALL. THIS CALL HAD ACTUALLY FIRST BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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ARRANGED FOR A DATE LAST FALL, BUT HAD TO BE POSTPONED BECAUSE FARZAT FELL ILL.
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Message Attributes

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